



NEWS RELEASE

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North Dakota Observes National HIV Testing Day
Department of Health Urges Testing for North Dakotans

BISMARCK, N.D. – In observance of National HIV Testing Day, June 27, the North Dakota Department of Health is urging people to “take the test and take control,” according to Gino Jose, HIV Prevention Coordinator for the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH).

National HIV Testing Day serves to spread global awareness and focus prevention efforts on the devastating impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This day also serves as a reminder that HIV testing is recommended for all persons, regardless of risk, at least once in that person’s lifetime, and more often for people who have high risk of infection. People at high risks include those who have unprotected sex, share needles for drug use, and get tattoos or piercings using non-sterile equipment.

Since surveillance began in 1984, over 700 HIV cases have been reported to the NDDoH, with approximately 396 individuals currently living with HIV/AIDS in North Dakota. Newly reported cases continue to increase annually in North Dakota and 33 cases have been reported to the state thus far in 2015. It is estimated that about one-fourth of the people who are HIV positive are unaware of their infections, and North Dakotans are likely no exception. Over one million people in the United States are HIV positive, and approximately 50,000 new infections occur every year. These estimations underscore the need for increased efforts to reach at-risk populations with HIV testing and prevention services.

“National HIV Testing Day is great opportunity to raise awareness about the impact the disease has on people, families and communities,” Jose said. “If you do not know if you are infected with HIV, you could be spreading it to others. People need to know how to keep themselves from becoming infected with HIV, so we can reduce the spread of this disease in our communities. The only way to know if you have HIV is to get tested.”

HIV testing is available at test sites throughout the state, and results are available in 20 minutes. The test sites are staffed by trained personnel who offer free and confidential HIV testing, counseling and referrals for those at risk. HIV can be prevented by avoiding or not engaging in risky behaviors. To find out where to get tested in your area, go to gettested.cdc.gov.

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For information about HIV testing and other HIV/AIDS services, call the NDDoH at 800.472.2180 or visit the program's website at www.ndhealth.gov/hiv. People can identify their risk factors through an anonymous survey at <http://www.ndhealth.gov/knowyourrisk>.

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